

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT —
HEADQUARTERS AND RESEARCH FACILITY

819. Ms R.S. STEPHENS to the Premier:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting Western Australia's agricultural sector through its significant investment in research, development and biosecurity. Can the Premier outline to this house what this government's massive \$320 million investment in a new state-of-the-art research facility for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will mean for WA primary producers, and can the Premier advise the house how this investment builds on this government's record of supporting WA's agricultural sector?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Albany for the question. Off the top, I want to thank Hon Alannah MacTiernan for her contribution to Western Australia—to politics in local government, federal government, the upper house, the lower house, the City of Perth, as mayor and councillor, and as an all-round terrific, hardworking person. I thank her very much.

This morning, the minister and I made a landmark announcement. We have allocated \$320 million to a world-class biosecurity and research facility for agriculture in Western Australia. The existing facilities in South Perth are past their use-by date, so we are now going to build a new world-class HQ for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development at Murdoch University's Perth campus. It will be on 11.3 hectares of land and it will house 350 staff. It will be a modern facility delivering world-class science with specialist laboratories, glasshouses, an incident and emergency management operations centre, and a headquarter and office building for the staff who work there. We have some of the best researchers in agriculture of anywhere in the world. Out of this, we will have one of the best research facilities of anywhere in the world. The minister argued for this and was successful, and I am so pleased we are able to announce this important initiative. She has done a terrific job in agriculture.

When the minister arrived in the portfolio, members will recall the fiscal cliff that was embedded in the budget. She repaired that. She brought it to the Expenditure Review Committee and we reinstated \$131.5 million of funding for agriculture. We hired 200 additional staff, including many researchers. Many of them are based in regional WA; in fact, more than ever under the last government, so we will have more agricultural staff in regional WA than when the Nationals WA occupied the position of agriculture minister.

Under Hon Alannah MacTiernan, we have also seen the \$48 million grains research partnership with the Grains Research and Development Corporation, \$25 million to kickstart the Western Australian Agricultural Research Collaboration, and \$15 million for biosecurity capabilities and emergency preparedness. We are focusing on carbon farming in the pastoral estate for the first time. That is something completely new that has not been done before. We have seen \$14 million invested in the digital farm program, \$13 million to manage the impact of wild dogs, and \$24 million to drive value-adding, including in the food and beverage industry, I think particularly down in Nambeelup near Mandurah. She is the state's first Minister for Hydrogen Industry. She has organised at least \$160 million of investment in renewable hydrogen. She has led the way in renewable hydrogen in Western Australia and I suspect that in 10 years' time, when this industry is strong and flourishing in Western Australia, people will look back at Hon Alannah MacTiernan as the mother of the industry. It is a terrific achievement.

There is so much more that she has done over her political career, including, of course—one that is close to mine and the member for Mandurah's heart—the railway to Rockingham. The railway to Mandurah, sorry! The railway to Rockingham and Mandurah and all the other places in between. She did a great job in delivering that, against great opposition at the time. I remember the motions being moved by the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA against it. She stood up to that and delivered the railway. One thing I will say about Alannah in closing: she is one of the great doers of Western Australian political history.